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2018

ASHES OF THE SEA

by Sean K. Reynolds

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ASHES OF THE SEA

Ashes of the Sea is a complete adventure for Numenera. Set a billion years in Earth's future, Numenera allows players take the roles of explorers and adventurers, uncovering the mysteries of long-vanished prior worlds.

In this adventure, the player characters (PCs) are accidentally teleported to a remote village near a strange technological ruin from an ancient civilization. They must convince the villagers to allow them to enter the forbidden structure, overcome the ruin's strange organic defenses, and find or build a device that will repair the damaged teleporter, which will allow them to go home again—or perhaps anywhere in the world!

Within this booklet please find everything you need to play. And don't forget to use the QR code to download six free pregenerated characters in PDF format.

TELEPORTATION ACCIDENT

The PCs had been exploring a derelict outpost built by unknown beings from an ancient civilization. Their goal was to find useful technology called the numenera—devices or parts of devices that could be used to create amazing effects—and they had been moderately successful, salvaging useful objects called *cyphers*, valuable technological components called *iotum*, and interesting-looking bits that the people of the Ninth World call *shins* and use as money. What happens next depends on how comfortable and experienced the players are with Numenera.

New/Inexperienced Players: If the players are new to Numenera, the GM should explain the gist of the setting, and then let the players have a few simple encounters in a prior-world ruin so they can learn how the system works (such as searching a big room for objects of the numenera, salvaging a broken numenera device for shins, and fighting a pair of *gazers* that activate to stop them from damaging anything). Once the players are comfortable with the game

rules, have them find a sealed room that appears to have been untouched by previous explorers, let them activate the weird device they find in that room—or have it activate automatically—and teleport them to the start of the written part of this adventure (see “Arrival”).

Experienced/Advanced Players: If the players are familiar with Numenera, or the GM feels the players can handle jumping into a new world and system with both feet, the teleportation room can be part of the back story to the adventure, and play begins with the PCs arriving at the teleport destination.

ARRIVAL

After unsealing a room that hadn't been looted by previous explorers, the PCs accidentally activate a machine that traps them in a force field bubble and bathes them in weird lights. The entire room vibrates with an increasing frequency, panels burst open and emit smoke, and finally there is a bright flash and the PCs are teleported somewhere...else.

As the spots from the bright flash fade, and the sensation of being stretched impossibly thin ends with a snap, the PCs realize they are in a new location. Instead of the small, pristine, well-illuminated chamber they were just in, they are now in a hangar-like domed building of

Gazer, page 18



Because of the extreme cold, PCs take 1 point of damage every ten minutes they spend here. This damage ignores armor (but not cyphers or character abilities that protect against cold damage).

If they're wearing cold-weather clothing, they take this damage only once per hour.

Oddity, page 22

Synth is a material similar to modern-day plastic.

If the players haven't played Numenera before, or are anxious to try out their combat abilities, consider having an encounter here with a pair of blacktusks to show them how combat works and let them use more of their character abilities.

Blacktusk, page 16

Because the PCs take cold damage every ten minutes, those with low Might scores may want to pause their hike for a 1-action recovery roll so the cold doesn't reduce them to 0 Might and move them one step down on the damage track.

Recovery roll, page 28

Damage track, page 27

bronze-colored metal. It is cold, nearly freezing, and the only faint light comes from the large open doorway. A light layer of snow covers most of the floor, especially near the large doorway.

Where the snow is absent, the PCs can see a series of unidentifiable symbols painted on the floor, marking the perimeter of a circle that takes up most of this room, its lines and dots heavily faded and scuffed. Metal panels have been pried loose from the walls, revealing wires, cables, and evidence that anything interesting or valuable was looted from this place long ago.

There are no resources in this location that the PCs can make use of—if they want to survive, they need to find food, shelter, and weather-appropriate clothing. If they search the building, all they find is a few pieces of useless metal or synth debris (the equivalent of a few screws, twist-ties, and so on) and a lot of snow. A cold wind blows, and a layer of snow over the ground makes this place look stark and unwelcoming.

THE MOUNTAIN

The building seems to be on a high slope of a tall mountain range extending north and south. A few gnarled trees jut out of the snow here and there. To the east, the mountain extends upward in a sharp incline toward some forbidding peaks. To the west, the mountain slopes downward toward a green valley surrounded by a white distortion in the air. It looks like there are about two hours of daylight left.

The “snow” is tiny flakes of a hard, white material resembling seashell, with most pieces about the size of a grain of sand. The shellsnow acts very much like real snow—the wind blows it about, it is slippery and crunchy to walk on, and so on—except it isn't made of water (which means the PCs can't melt and drink it). There are



no clouds, just a haze in some parts of the sky. This shellsnow doesn't seem to be falling from the sky except for the small amounts stirred up by the wind.

If the PCs spend at least ten minutes examining, searching, or trying to salvage the technological components in the walls, they can attempt a level 6 task. If they fail, they realize that anything that could have been taken is already gone, and anything that remains is either valueless or is so large and integrated into the walls that it can't be removed without rendering it useless and valueless. If they succeed, they find an oddity that previous looters overlooked: a finger-sized piece of metal and glass that emits a puff of air (about as strong as a person can blow) when squeezed.

A PC skilled in crafting numenera, salvaging numenera, or understanding numenera can tell that there are a few sockets in the walls that look like specific devices could be plugged into, but what those items would do or how to activate them is unknown.

Once the PCs are through with this area, they need to decide where to go next. There's nothing noteworthy they can see to the north or south along the face of the mountain. The upward climb to the east seems difficult and dangerous. If the PCs follow the downhill slope toward the green valley, they should get there in about an hour and a half (by sundown, assuming they haven't spent a lot of time in this area).

THE VALLEY

As the PCs approach the green valley, they realize the distortion they saw around it is a cloud of shellsnow being churned into the air and slowly rotating clockwise around the entire valley like a storm. The shellsnow isn't being moved by the wind—intermittent gusts don't have any effect on the moving flakes, even if the wind is blowing in the opposite direction of the flurries.

THE PYLONS

The perimeter of the valley has a series of vertical, bronze-colored metal pylons, each as thick as a wrist and almost 100 feet (30 m) tall, topped with a glowing blue crystal and a flattened metal ring floating above it. They are spaced about 600 feet (180 m) apart. These devices give off a faint noise sounding like a voice constantly singing “aaaaahhhhhhhh,” and are warm to the touch, like a dark-colored rock on a sunny day. Very fine etchings on the surface of the pylons might be writing or some kind of circuitry, but are indecipherable to the PCs.

SALVAGING NUMENERA

Attempting to salvage an object or structure for valuable numenera requires a set of light tools and takes anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour. The difficulty of the task is equal to the level of the item being salvaged (the structures in the Icon's cave are level 5). Training in the salvaging numenera skill eases this task, and having another PC (with another set of tools) helping the salvaging PC can ease the task. The PC doing the salvaging must decide if they're trying to get cyphers, iotum, or shins, or if they are just trying to get whatever they can. Salvaging means the PC is opening access panels, taking apart devices, and otherwise accessing the source's interior. Doing so provides a chance to find something of interest; refer to Salvage Success to determine exactly what.

Salvage Success: If the salvaging task is a success, the PC gains something useful—cyphers, iotum, shins, and so on. The description for each salvage location in the Icon's cave explains what the PCs get for a successful roll.

Parts: Parts are miscellaneous bits that can be reused (like screws, nuts, bolts, circuit boards, and so on). Parts are tracked in units, and what kind of parts they are doesn't really matter. Any successful salvaging always gets the PC a number of units of parts equal to the level of the item being salvaged.

Salvage Results: If the salvage attempt is successful, the PCs get something for their work. Any later attempts to salvage that location are hindered by two steps.

If the initial salvage attempt fails, the item the PCs are attempting to salvage has nothing of value, or the useful pieces are too difficult to remove without destroying them. Like any task the PCs repeat after a failure, all later attempts require applying Effort.

Additional Salvage Attempts: Each time characters locate a potential source for salvage, a subsequent attempt to search the same specific area again is hindered by one additional step. Once a building in the Icon's cave is salvaged, it can't be salvaged again for numenera, although a successful salvaging roll gets the PCs another 5 units of parts.

Salvaging Cyphers: Unused cyphers can be salvaged for shins, iotum, and parts. The difficulty of the salvage roll is equal to the cypher's level. Success means the cypher is destroyed and the PC gains 1d10 shins, units of parts equal to the cypher's level, and one roll on the *random iotum table*.

The valley pylons are powerful numenera devices that maintain the valley's temperature and weather, and discourage large creatures (such as *blacktusks*) from entering the valley. When necessary, they automatically create a short-term force field dome to shelter the valley from large threats like meteors, avalanches, and high-velocity impacts (anything from a rocket-propelled missile to something minor like a flying arrow), all of which are deflected off the dome. The force field won't activate in response to slower objects (including thrown weapons or a running creature). The pylons also prevent most of the shellsnow from entering the valley, and a side effect of this barrier causes the slow clockwise "storm" of levitating flurries.

The pylons look like metallic bronze but are made of a much stronger metal, and are essentially invulnerable to any force the PCs can produce. Attempting to damage or open a pylon results in a small electrical shock that inflicts 2 points of Might damage. The columns are very slightly flexible, and a determined PC can shake one hard enough to cause the top of the unit to sway a little bit, but this doesn't seem to interfere with its abilities and doesn't trigger the electrical shock.

This is a great time to introduce PCs to GM intrusions. The affected PC gets 2 XP, one of which the PC must give to a friend. Tell the PCs they can spend the XP to improve their characters if they use 4 XP, keep it to re-roll rolls they are not happy with, or to refuse a future GM intrusion.

Beyond the pylons, the air is clear, the foliage is green, and the air is noticeably warmer but still cool, like a brisk autumn day. The valley is about 2 miles (3.2 km) across at its longest axis and about half that distance wide. Trees are plentiful and (for the most part) are planted in rows. In the middle of these groves of trees, near the center of the valley, is a tiny village with two different kinds of buildings—bronze metal domes and square stone cottages with sod roofs. To the north, near the edge of the valley border, is a huge bronze statue of a multi-armed humanoid creature with a glowing blue crystal where its face should be. There isn't a road or path from the PCs' current position to the village, but from here they can tell that there is such a thing closer to the orchards.

Random Iotum Table, page 15

GM Intrusion: *One of the PCs slips on the shellsnow and tumbles hard into the pylon, triggering its electrical shock defense.*

Valley pylons, level 8

Blacktusk, page 16

Once inside the valley, the PCs stop taking cold damage.

THE ORCHARDS

There are several kinds of trees around the village, ranging from short to tall and pale green to a dark olive color. Many of them produce fruit (red, yellow, and blue, all of it safe and tasty for humans) or nuts, and some have a loose kind of bark that looks like it peels away from the trunk in book-sized sheets. The PCs often see small wooden ladders and step stools resting near or against the taller trees.

Plump short-legged birds nest in the gaps between roots or in small wooden houses with removable roofs. The birds chase bugs, scratch at the ground for worms, and generally ignore the PCs (but casually strut away if anyone tries to touch them).

A well-trod path leads toward the village, and the closer they get to the village, the clearer it and the paths between the trees become. This is obviously a cultivated area that was set up by intelligent creatures—presumably those in the nearby village.

WELCOMING PARTY

Unless the PCs chose to sneak into the orchards, someone from the village spots them, and the villagers send out a trio of people to meet them, either in the orchard or at the border between the trees and the village. If the PCs sneak into the orchard and into the village itself, skip this initial encounter and allow the PCs to decide when they show themselves (strangers suddenly appearing in their village is very alarming to the locals, and all interactions with them will be hindered until the PCs prove that they mean no harm).

The three villagers sent to meet the PCs are cautious but curious. All three—two men and one woman—are between 20 and 40 years old, dressed in simple warm garments of woven fibers under fur-lined capes. They adorn their clothing and hair with bronze-metal bits and what appear to be several kinds of brightly-colored seashells (the people use these decorations for aesthetics and currency, with each piece used as one shin). Each is carrying a staff with a sharp curve on the end (like a shepherd's crook), a tool they use to pick fruit, as a walking stick, and (if threatened) a weapon.

The villagers hail the PCs in an accented version of the Truth and introduce themselves as Ayil, Rieo, and Yoma from the village of Bardak. They say they haven't had a visitor to their part of the world in a generation, and if the PCs promise to cause no trouble, they are welcome to come to the village for food, shelter, and warm clothes. The villagers are neither hostile nor lying—their invitation and motives are genuine. If asked, they'll answer basic questions about the village (see the bullet point topics in the next section).

THE VILLAGE OF BARDAK

The people of Bardak are happy to relate their history to the PCs, which is only history as they understand it, since the written records were destroyed and they have only verbal stories that have been repeated over the generations.

The village has twenty-five homes and a few other buildings. Of these, six are metal domes made of the same bronze-looking metal as the pylons, and (like the pylons) they are basically impervious to any attempts by the PCs to harm them. Each dome has one door with a circular pad that if touched opens or closes the door. The remaining buildings are square and made of mortared stone, with sod roofs. Each home (regardless of its materials) houses several generations of one family (married partners, their children, and the children's grandparents). Food from the orchards is plentiful and the egg-birds thrive in the temperate valley, so the people don't have to work too hard to survive, giving them a lot of idle time for telling stories and praying. Their greatest threat is inbreeding due to a small gene pool, but it is not a serious risk yet, and in any case, there is little they can do about that except ask their rare visitors to join their village and start families. The villagers don't know where the founders came from or where any other communities are nearby—they have been isolated here a long, long time.

The Icon is the large statue to the north. The villagers speak of it as if it were a sleeping protector god, dangerous if woken unexpectedly, but generally benign. They leave offerings of

BARDAK HISTORY

Bardak is a very tiny isolated village with only about 100 people, all of them descendants of a group of travelers who were brought here about 200 years ago by the numenera. The founders used the numenera to create the pylons that keep away the bad weather, build the metal homes at the center of the village, plant the orchards that fill the valley, and establish the wards and rituals that keep the Icon sleeping and happy. The numenera told the founders to live here, watch over the valley, and protect the Icon from those who would wake or harm it, and that is what they have done, passing on these traditions to their children like it was a religion. They understand (and are somewhat ashamed) that their efforts and faith have not been perfect, and as punishment in recent years one of the pylons has stopped singing, and from time to time dangerous creatures have entered the valley.

Sneaking into the orchard is a difficulty 3 task.

Hindered, page 23

Typical villager:
Level 2, health 6,
level 3 for farming

The Truth is the common language of the civilized parts of the Ninth World.



food and carved wooden figurines at the base of the path leading up to the Icon, but never step past that point, as they believe the Icon is prone to having nightmares and causes earthquakes when it is startled or the religious rites are not performed correctly. The Icon sleeps on top of a doorway to the underworld, protecting the valley from dangerous nano-spirits imprisoned there. Nobody in the village alive today has gotten close to the Icon or looked into the doorway—doing so is forbidden by the Great Elders, and the punishment is banishment from the village.

Forty years ago, a small group of strangers came to the village, saying they came from a place far away. They did not heed the elders' warnings about the Icon and chose to look upon the underworld with their own eyes. They were never seen again, and shortly after they went through the door, an earthquake shook the valley and one of the southern pylons stopped singing. The elders tell a story of another group of visitors who came to the village long, long ago (before the elders were even born), stayed for six days, then decided to head west down the mountain and were never seen again.

The villagers explain that Bardak is guided by three Great Elders—people who are well over a hundred years old, kept alive by blessings from the numenera, and are very wise. Any decisions that affect the entire tribe (such as religious

matters or inviting the PCs to stay more than a couple of days) must have the input of all three Great Elders. If the PCs want to discuss important issues, or if they want to know more about or investigate the Icon, some of the villagers inform the Great Elders, who personally make an appearance to talk with the PCs. Likewise, if the PCs cause trouble, the Great Elders show up and try to put a stop to it before any villagers get hurt.

THE GREAT ELDERS

Augrom, Okeyay, and Thoak are the three Great Elders of Bardak. Each of them reached old age eighty to ninety years ago, but were able to bond with one of three life crucibles—life-sustaining artifacts left behind by the founders. The crucibles fused with their flesh, fortified them against disease and poison, and have been keeping them alive ever since. Each of the Great Elders is now at least 140 years old, but their crucibles keep them strong and healthy. Decades of associating with each other, compounded by their shared experience of forced evolution, has made the three Great Elders very similar in personality and temperament.

A life crucible is a levitating one-person vehicle made of metal (the bronze-like stuff used elsewhere in the village), shell-like growths, and glass, looking much like a spherical chair that can envelop an entire person (legs and all), with

Great Elders: *Level 3; level 4 for interaction tasks and resisting mental influence; health 9; Armor 3; heals 1 Health per round; immune to diseases, poisons, and ageing*

The life crucibles aren't deliberately making the Great Elders into lobster-like creatures.

a vertical metal pole extending out of the bottom that doesn't quite reach the ground. There are two drawbacks to bonding with a crucible: removing a person from the crucible is fatal, and the crucible seems to be evolving or mutating the elders into something other than human. The Great Elders have swollen, distorted bodies and faces, somewhat like a caterpillar, except instead of transforming into a butterfly or moth, they appear to be something in between the shape of a human and a lobster, with carapace-like growths on the chest and stomach, and several pairs of little secondary limbs.

Like most of the numenera, humans have adapted existing technology in ways that weren't intended. The crucibles weren't designed to keep humans alive, so the Great Elders' physical changes are probably a side effect of whatever unknown function the crucibles were built to do.

The villagers are very respectful and deferential toward the elders. Most of them bow when an elder approaches, and many of them unconsciously repeat certain things the elders say, like they are responding to a sermon. None of the villagers will go against the word of an elder. The villagers do not understand the technology that keeps the elders alive, or why it has changed the elders' bodies, but the elders'

wisdom has kept the valley safe for a long time, and that is reason enough to heed their words.

The Great Elders reiterate and clarify anything the other villagers told the PCs. If the PCs seem like people who would be useful to the survival of the tribe, the Great Elders are likely to invite them to settle down in the village.

The one thing the Great Elders are absolutely insistent about is that nobody should go to the Icon or enter the doorway at its base. This was forbidden by the elders' grandparents, the founders of Bardak, who said that the Icon watches over the valley in exchange for keeping its sacred space untouched by mortal hands. The Great Elders try different methods to deter the PCs' interest in that place—the underworld nano-spirits beneath it will kill them, it has powerful guardians to keep out trespassers, there is a spirit creature that will eat the soul of anyone who dares go there, interfering with the Icon will destroy the wards placed on the valley, the last people to try it were never seen again and the valley had an earthquake the day they tried, and so on. Of course, the PCs have heard similar arguments from superstitious people many times before, all of it rumors and lies to keep people away from valuable and powerful numenera...



CONVINCING THE TRIBE

If the PCs want to leave, the villagers prepare satchels with about three days worth of food for each PC and give them each a warm cloak to protect against the weather. A small group of villagers gathers to watch the PCs leave, but there is no ceremony or sentimentality to it.

If the PCs want permission to approach the Icon, they need to convince two or more of the Great Elders to vote in their favor. Because they reinforce each others' attitudes, these attempts to persuade them must be done one at a time when the other two Great Elders are not present. Because the elders have been enforcing these traditions for over a century, they are stuck in their ways, and attempts to influence them are **hindered**.

If all the PCs spend at least a day using their skills and abilities to help the village (even hard physical labor will do, although it is not as impressive as some character abilities, and takes a few days to "count for as much" as a significant effort), the task to influence a Great Elder is **eased** (which cancels out being hindered).

The GM should let the players get creative with how they might use their abilities to help the village. If they can't think of anything, feel free to make the following suggestions:

- **Gather Stone:** Some of the homes are crowded, and younger couples are planning on building new cottages to give their families room to grow. This requires a lot of stone, and gathering enough for one cottage takes about 30 person-hours worth of labor (so 6 hours of five people working, 15 hours of two people working, and so on).
- **Build a Cottage:** If there is enough stone on hand, building the walls of a simple stone cottage takes about 18 hours of hard labor (usually spread out over three days instead of all in one go). Every two people helping reduces this time by about 3 hours.
- **Meat and Hides:** The valley provides all the food the villagers need, but people still have a taste for exotic foods, especially for celebrations. Packs of **blacktusks** sometimes roam outside the pylons. Blacktusk fur is very warm, and the villagers have a special recipe for blacktusk steaks. The PCs would need to track down the wandering predators (which hunt in packs of three) or find a lair. One dead blacktusk would be appreciated, and two would be cause for a feast. The blacktusk lair has one **random cypher**.
- **Dangerous Interlopers:** A cave near the "quiet" southern pylon has become overgrown with icy growths over the past

few days, resembling a castle. The elders say the last time such a thing appeared near the village it meant that dangerous creatures called **ice weavers** had moved into the area, and they soon started attacking the villagers. The PCs could investigate this structure and kill or drive away the ice weavers, but the elders warn that the beasts can suck the heat right out of a person's body, and they travel in packs. The ice weavers have two cyphers embedded in the walls of their lair.

PERMISSION TO EXPLORE

If the PCs convince the Great Elders to allow them to visit the Icon, one of the elders insists on cautiously seeing them off as they leave the village. This is more of a show for the benefit of the other villagers—depending on their attitude toward the PCs, they might warn the villagers that the foolish PCs are marching to their deaths and that no wise people should ever do this, or say that the PCs have the blessing of the elders and are seeking new wisdom from the Icon, and so on.

Award each PC 1 XP for convincing the Great Elders to allow them to visit the Icon. Proceed to the Approaching the Icon section of this adventure.

SNEAKING OUT

The PCs might try to sneak out of the village and over to the Icon without anyone noticing them. Fortunately, this is fairly easy to do, especially if they have special abilities that conceal their activities. If they fail, they are spotted, and the elders and some villagers confront them in the orchards—go to the Exploration Refused section. If they succeed at sneaking out, proceed to the Approaching the Icon section.

EXPLORATION REFUSED

If the PCs fail to convince the elders to allow them to explore the Icon, and are obvious in their plans to explore it anyway, the elders have the PCs watched, and when the PCs start to make their way toward the Icon, the elders (and ten villagers armed with staves) get in their path as they pass through the orchards, insisting that they leave the valley immediately. If the PCs refuse to turn back, the elders and villagers attack and attempt to subdue the PCs.

If the PCs lose this fight, they are tied up, given warm cloaks and some food, taken outside the western pylons, and told never to return to the valley. Of course, even if they're exiled this way, there's no reason the PCs can't travel along the pylons to the north and approach the Icon from a different direction (the only drawback

Ice weaver, page 19

Normally, persuading a Great Elder is a level 4 task, but the task is hindered so it is level 5.

Hindered, page 23

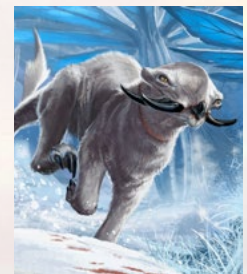
Suggesting that the Icon might have a way to reactivate the disabled southern pylon is a good tactic for persuading an elder.

Eased, page 23

GM intrusion

suggestion: *One of the PCs doesn't follow house-building instructions well, setting back construction by 6 hours.*

Sneaking out of the village is a level 3 task. If the PCs try it while it is dark outside, the task is eased.



Blacktusk, page 16

Random cypher table, page 15

Great Elder: *Level 3; level 4 for interaction tasks and resisting mental influence; health 9; Armor 3; heals 1 Health per round; immune to diseases, poisons, and ageing.*

Typical villager: *Level 2, health 6, level 3 for farming*

GM intrusion suggestion: *In response to a physical threat, a crucible transforms into a cyborg battle suit for a Great Elder, making it level 5 for attack and defense tasks.*

Random cypher table, page 15



The Icon, level 8, health 50, Armor 3, immune to electricity

to this is that once they're outside the pylon boundary, they'll be out in the cold again and taking damage every ten minutes, or every hour if they wear the warm cloaks).

If the PCs defeat most of the villagers and at least one of the elders, the remaining elders call for a truce, stating that the PCs clearly outmatch them and it is pointless to throw away lives trying to stop them, at which point the elders and villagers retreat into their homes and barricade their doors in case the PCs unleash some doom upon the valley.

If the PCs fought the villagers (regardless of who wins), thereafter all interactions with the villagers or the elders are hindered by three steps, because the PCs are considered dangerous, reckless, and disrespectful toward the beliefs of the tribe.

Defeated villagers have 1d10 shins each. A defeated elder's crucible can be looted for a **random cypher**: equal chances of a gravity nullifier, Might rejuvenator, or warmth projector. If the PCs chose not to kill the elder, the crucible keeps them alive, but it can no longer levitate (the villagers will have to build a mobility cart for that elder).

APPROACHING THE ICON

The path leading to the Icon winds back and forth to the north, sometimes making a switchback to reach a higher elevation. Along the sides of the path are the remnants of old offerings of food and wooden carvings from villagers too afraid or too respectful to approach any closer. Just before the path becomes jagged and precarious is a small pile of flat stones, each with a warning inscribed upon it in the Truth to come no closer. The path near the stones is covered in more offerings, most of which are at least a week old. Beyond the stone markers, the path continues along the top of a low ridge for about a long distance, then smoothes out again as it covers another zig-zagging long distance in the final approach to the Icon itself. The statue is near the pylon boundary, but at least a bowshot away from the nearest pylon. Flurries of snow or shellsnow blow about in the wind, and the air is much colder at this altitude compared to the rest of the valley.

The Icon is a roughly-humanoid metal statue with a thin torso, broad shoulders, at least six arms (with the lower pairs smaller than the uppermost one), a glowing blue crystal where its face should be, and long horizontal horns jutting from the sides of its head. Its lower half merges with a stone peak, making it hard to tell if it has legs or some other alien body parts. A vertical line of blue crystal extends from its

chest toward its midsection and downward to a cave-like opening beneath it, all of which has the same glow, pulsing in a downward pattern like a river of light trickling from the statue's face. From the path approaching its base to the top of its angular head, it is easily 40 feet (12 m) tall. At this distance, it is easy to see that the Icon was probably made by the same beings who built the pylons. It is made of the same bronze-like metal, has similar blue crystals, and features several levitating metal rings. There is a sensation of powerful energy in the air, and the Icon is faintly making the same singing sound as the pylons.

The path leads into the glowing cave at the base of the Icon. There are no paths or handholds to indicate there is an easy way to climb onto the statue itself. Climbing onto the Icon is a difficulty 4 task. Touching the Icon triggers its defenses, and anyone touching it must make a level 8 Might defense roll or take 1 point of electricity damage (this damage ignores armor). This repeats each round someone is still touching it, with the damage increasing by 1 point each time. The electrical defense stops if nobody touches the Icon for a full minute. When inspected at a close distance, it is apparent that there are no doors, hatches, panels, or other mechanisms on the surface of the Icon; even the glowing crystals appear to be seamlessly fused with the metal. The only way in is the ground-level cave entrance.

BENEATH THE ICON

The cave entrance is about 15 feet (4.5 m) high and diamond-shaped in cross section. The blue crystal from the Icon extends to the cave entrance and along the ceiling, illuminating the area with a glow nearly as bright as daylight. The floor of the cave has been carved (with remarkable precision) into a smooth set of stairs leading downward. A small amount of shellsnow, dirt, and other debris has accumulated in the corners of the stairs, but otherwise it looks like no people have been here in quite a while. The blue ceiling light becomes less intense the deeper the stairs go.

One round after anything about the size of a human steps through the doorway, the ceiling light begins to quickly strobe in an irregular pattern. Anyone within a short distance of the entrance who can see the light must make an Intellect defense roll (level 8) or become stunned for one round, losing their action. This flashing repeats once per minute as long as someone is within a short distance of the entryway.



The PCs don't have to salvage these three devices in the adventure (they can opt to salvage them as cyphers and shins instead of fully-functional machines), but not doing so means they won't be able to teleport home, and will have to leave the village on foot and figure out where in the world they are. Numenera is all about discovery and exploration!

THE ICON'S CAVE

The stairs continue downward a short distance and open up into a larger cave (with the PCs arriving at the south end), the floor of which is covered in a lumpy layer of shellsnow and spattered with waste from harmless ceiling-dwelling flying animals. The cave is roughly circular and about a long distance in diameter. The ceiling light ends just past the stairs, giving off enough light to reveal seven bronze-metal buildings built inside the cave. The buildings are all approximately the same size. One of the domes doesn't have a door, but all the others have a metal door with a large circular pad on it, just like the dome houses in Bardak.

The dome exteriors are level 8, but the numenera and walls on the inside are only level 5. The doors automatically shut one minute after they are opened (the inner side of the door has a touchpad like the outside).

FLYING DEFENDERS

When the PCs first leave the steps and enter the cave, ten gazers fly out of concealed niches and create a spherical formation about half as tall as a human. They pivot their red beam-generating crystals toward the closest PC and blink warningly. This is an attempt at deterrence rather than a prelude to a surprise attack. If the PCs move farther into the cave, or act like they're going to attack the gazers, the machines shoot first, acting as two level 3 swarms. If the PCs retreat up the stairs, the gazers stop attacking and do not follow, but if the PCs return, the gazers recognize them by sight and resume their attack.

RECYCLING TECHNOLOGY

The PCs don't know it yet, but by carefully salvaging numenera from these structures, they can gather iotum and devices that, if connected to the high-altitude dome the PCs arrived in at the start of this adventure, can be used to teleport them back to the part of the world they're from. If the PCs attempt to salvage anything from any of the domes here, they realize that the physical connectors between devices (sockets, plugs, and so on) match those they saw in the arrival dome, and they might be

able to use numenera from this cave to repair or build a functional teleporter there and send themselves home.

The items the PCs need are a navigational system from area 1, a power battery from area 2, a dimensional interface from area 3, and 3 io and 1 bio-circuitry. Those items, plus some miscellaneous parts and know-how, when plugged into the proper ports in the arrival dome, allow the PCs to make a one-use teleportation device that should send them back to where they came from.

INCONVENIENT WORM ENCOUNTER

A swarm of twelve chaliks lives in this cave, feeding on ceiling-flyers and whatever else stumbles into this area. These big insects can propel themselves across or through the shellsnow like they are swimming or burrowing, leaving odd wandering trails everywhere in this area. As the PCs move around in the cave and make noise, they'll hear an unsettling scratching and scrabbling noise as the chaliks circle around and assess their prey. The chaliks prefer to attack an isolated PC (perhaps one standing guard outside a dome while the others search or salvage), or make their move at an inopportune time for the PCs, such as while they are resting or sleeping. When the chaliks decide to attack, they approach by burrowing under the layer of shellsnow, hindering by two steps any chances to notice them approaching.

1. NAVIGATION

This dome is located in the southeast part of the cave. When its door is opened, small blue lights activate in the interior, and a blue hologram-like screen appears with diagrams and strange writing. A successful understanding numenera roll takes ten minutes and means the PC thinks this device is some sort of mapping tool, or a tracking system, or a navigational aid, but none of the details or landmarks are anything they recognize (or even seem to be related to points on Earth that the PCs are familiar with).

Salvage: With a successful salvaging roll, the PCs can acquire a functional navigational device,

Chalik, page 17

Although normally not present in cold climates, these chaliks have adapted (or have been biologically engineered) to thrive in the cooler temperatures of this region.

GM intrusion

suggestion: A PC moving during combat with the swarm trips on something buried in the shellsnow—the skeletal remains of a human, perhaps one of the previous explorers teleported here. It has 4 shins and perhaps a piece of commonplace gear (such as a knife).

Gazer, page 18

Hindered, page 23

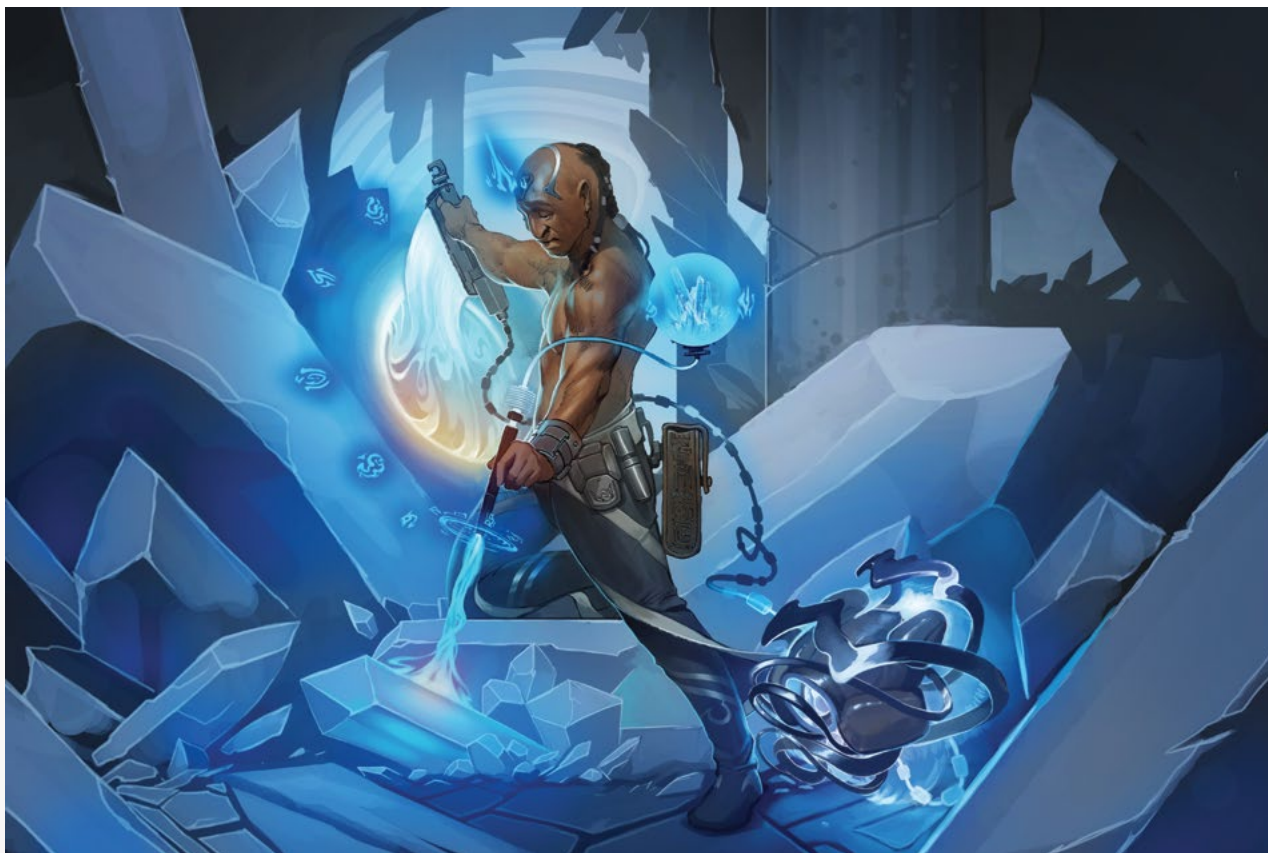
Salvage, page 3

Io is a kind of battery. It might look like glowing crystals, metallic boxes etched with symbols, a synth tube crackling with static, and so on.

Bio-circuitry is a quasi-living circuit board. It looks like a mesh of veins and nerves in a skin-like gel.

Once a PC has successfully used a holographic interface in one of these domes, tasks to use the holograms in the other domes are eased.

Eased, page 23



Responsive synth is a flexible kind of synth that can be etched like a circuit board.

Io, page 9

a random cypher, 1d2 responsive synth and 3 io, and 1d10 shins. The navigational device is about the size of a briefcase and looks like a series of bronze-metal spheres and thin pipes, each with needle-like projections sticking in many directions. If they don't care about keeping the navigational device functional, they can disassemble it for another random cypher.

2. GEOTHERMAL POWER

This dome is larger than the other by half and is located on the northwest part of the cave. The air around this dome is noticeably warmer than the rest of the cave, comparable to holding your hand near a lit torch. Touching the dome or the door inflicts 1 point of damage from heat (this damage ignores armor). Using a tool (even something like a knife) to touch the pad opens the door without inflicting any damage. The air inside the dome is hot like a sauna and pours out into the main room as long as the door is open. The heat is uncomfortable enough that a human inside this building takes 1 point of heat damage every ten minutes they spend there.

The far half of the room is filled with hundreds of vertical metal pipes topped with flat or round caps. The near half of the room is open, and a blue hologram-like screen appears with diagrams and strange writing. The pipes sometimes make gurgling noises like liquid is moving around in them.

A PC skilled in understanding numenera can successfully interact with the hologram by experimenting with it for ten minutes and making a level 5 understanding numenera roll. Once this connection is made, the PCs can spend another ten minutes to access some of the information stored here, which seems to be about regulating and channeling a power source deep underground.

One holographic diagram vaguely resembles a topographical map of the valley, with about 50 symbols representing the pylons marked on the map. One pylon on the south end of the valley has a very different symbol than the others; the PCs' understanding of what the symbols mean is very rudimentary, but given that the villagers and elders spoke of a southern pylon that "stopped singing," it's a reasonable bet to think that this unique symbol indicates the pylon isn't functioning. A PC who understands the holographic interface can spend ten minutes trying to reroute power to the nonfunctional pylon. If they make a level 5 understanding numenera roll, they are successful, and the symbol changes to match that of the other pylons. (They could use a similar technique to turn off an active pylon.)

If the PCs have salvaged the navigation dome (area 1) or the dimensional interface dome (area 4), they might briefly see a holographic warning

image here showing a dome with a flashing diagram of the missing device or devices (which they recognize as the object they claimed or disassembled from that dome).

Salvage: The systems controlled in this dome are delicately connected to the functioning of the pylons, and reckless salvage here means about one-third of the pylons shut down. With a successful salvaging roll, the PCs can acquire a functional power battery and 1d10 shins; they also recognize there are two other devices here that they could remove and use as cyphers, but trying to loosen them triggers warnings on the holographic interface. If the PCs stop salvaging those two devices and push them back into place, the warnings stop. If the PCs decide to loot those two cyphers anyway, 20 of the pylons shut down. The PCs can reactivate five of those pylons by using the holographic interface to reroute power (a level 5 understanding numenera task), but the loss of so many active pylons greatly reduces the system's ability to protect the valley, with dangerous long-term consequences for the villagers. Reattaching a removed device is a level 5 crafting numenera task; if both are reattached, the pylons regain power after 1d10 minutes.

The salvaged power battery is a squared-off cylinder the length of a human forearm, with rows of blue crystal lights along the length, apertures at both ends, and a tendency to heat up for a few seconds before returning to room temperature again. If the PCs don't care about keeping the power battery functional, they can disassemble it for 1d2 responsive synth and 5 io and a random cypher.

3. HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

This dome is slightly smaller than the others and is located in the southwest part of the cave, near the wall. Its doorway is open and there doesn't seem to be a door built into it. The shellsnow covers the floor inside just like it does in the cave, except there are no animals living here, so all of it is uniformly pale off-white. There are no grooves in the shellsnow (a device built into this structure keeps animals away despite having an open door) and its surface is smooth (whatever human tracks might have been here have been erased by a thousand years of earthquakes in this region).

As soon as anyone enters the room, subtle blue crystal lights come to life on the inner surface of the dome, shining dozens of harmless laser-like beams into the room, forming relaxing wavelike patterns. If someone sits or stands in the center of the room and makes large gestures that interrupt the beams, the crystals adjust in response to the PC's movements. If someone

can create the proper activation gestures (requiring several minutes and a successful level 5 understanding numenera roll), a telepathic sequence begins playing into the minds of anyone in the dome.

The message feels like a memory, but is clearly not something the PCs personally experienced, and the narrative is weird and disjointed.

Huge pale animals resembling hard-shelled sea creatures, harnessed with bands and implants of bronze. A sea of black spots against a red background, whorled with umber. A sensation of time passing. A blue sphere appearing in the red. Pain. Cold. The great sea creatures struggling against an invisible weight. They die. Smaller sea creatures dismantle their metal and flesh, leaving tiny fragments everywhere. A blue light in darkness. Bronze domes scattered like pebbles. Time. Weariness. Sleep.

The PCs can repeat this message as often as they want, and some details change slightly each time it is played, but the overall story is basically the same. They can't make this building do anything else. If nobody is in the Historical Archive for ten minutes or more, the beams stop and the crystal lights go dark.

Salvage: There is no numenera in this dome that is essential to the functioning of the Icon or the pylons, so the PCs can salvage things to their hearts' content without worrying about endangering the villagers. With a successful salvaging roll, the PCs can acquire a random cypher and 1d10 shins.

4. DIMENSIONAL FIELD REGULATOR

This dome is located near the center of the cave, and is surrounded by several clusters of vertical bronze-metal pipes, similar to the valley pylons, but only twice as tall as a human. When the door to this dome opens, the first thing the PCs notice is a human figure on the floor, dressed in explorer's clothing, its flesh withered away in the dry air so that it almost looks mummified.

A few seconds after the door opens, a holographic interface appears in the air, gently illuminating the interior of the dome and revealing that one of the wall panels has been pried open, revealing some of the numenera built into the dome. There is no obvious cause of death for the dead explorer (no wounds or obvious trauma), but the body has been here so many years that something subtle might have killed this person and the signs of it faded over the years. The body has a set of small tools and several knives.

A PC who fails a task can usually try again, but they must apply Effort on any attempts after the first one.

GM intrusion

suggestion: One PC has an adverse reaction to this psychic message, and must succeed at a level 5 Intellect defense roll or have all Intellect-based tasks hindered for the next ten minutes.

Hindered, page 23



GM intrusion suggestion: *Removing the dimensional interface causes a short circuit, inflicting 5 points of Might damage to the PC (this ignores armor) and causing a minor earthquake.*

Pliable metal is as strong and durable as steel, but flexible enough to make bags, books, hinges, and so on.

Typical villager: Level 2, health 6, level 3 for farming

Village mob: Level 4, health 12, damage 4; can grab one PC and restrain them unless they succeed at a Might roll to free themselves

Great Elder: Level 3; level 4 for interaction tasks and resisting mental influence; health 9; Armor 3; heals 1 health per round; immune to diseases, poisons, and aging

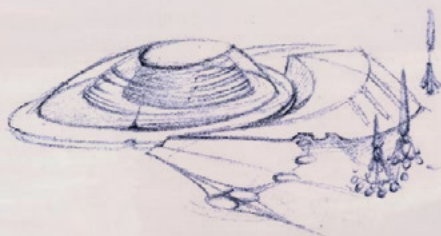
Interacting with the holographic interface takes ten minutes and a successful understanding numenera roll. The machines appear to create, contain, and adjust exotic energy fields that resonate at different frequencies. Each of those frequencies corresponds to one entry in a long list, but what those entries mean is something the PCs can't decipher.

Salvage: The systems controlled in this dome help regulate the functions built into the pylons, and careless salvage here means the pylons become much less effective at protecting the valley. With a successful salvaging roll, the PCs can acquire a functional dimensional interface and 1d10 shins; they also recognize that there is another device they could remove and use as a cypher, but loosening it creates a weird spinning sensation in the cave and causes a minor earthquake. If the PCs decide to loot the cypher anyway, the hologram shows several alarm symbols over a map of the pylons, and the pylons can no longer deflect attacks or creatures (they can only mitigate the weather in the valley). Reattaching the removed cypher is a level 5 crafting numenera task; success means the pylons start working normally again.

The salvaged dimensional interface is a blue crystal about the size of a human head, with blinking blue lights swirling around inside it and multiple incomplete metal shells surrounding it like layers of an onion. There is a complex aperture at one end, and the whole thing feels almost weightless, like a balloon. If the PCs don't care about keeping the dimensional interface functional, they can disassemble it for 1d2 pliable metal and 2 io and a random cypher.

ADDITIONAL DOMES

The other domes in this cave are left for the GM to expand this area with additional encounters for an ongoing campaign. (For an even larger expansion, one of them could have a ramp or elevator to a lower level that opens onto an even larger cave with more domes and other devices.) If you're using this adventure as a one-shot or introduction to Numenera and you don't want to add additional material here, their doors are sealed and cannot be opened by the PCs—the touch-pad doesn't respond to any activity, or perhaps it makes curt noises or flashes a light to indicate an unauthorized attempt.



BACK TO THE VILLAGE

Once the PCs have taken what they want from the Icon's cave, they can return to the village of Bardak, or skip interacting with the villagers again and move on to their next destination (whether that is down the mountain, up to the arrival dome, or elsewhere).

Award each PC 1 XP for exploring and salvaging the ancient structures underneath the Icon. If they salvaged all three items they need to rebuild the teleporter, give each PC an additional 1 XP.

PYLON ACTIVATED

If the PCs return to the village and they have reactivated the unpowered pylon, the whole village knows about it. (Even if the PCs caused an earthquake, if all the pylons are fully functional, the villagers accept this as a necessary consequence of fixing the problem.) The villagers speak many prayers and blessings for the PCs, thanking them for helping protect their village and valley, and insisting they stay a few days to enjoy a celebratory feast in their honor. Even the Great Elders are impressed and praise the PCs (although because of their somewhat-inhuman features it is difficult to tell how they really feel about the situation).

The feast takes place at sundown around a large bonfire, with all the villagers singing and dancing some of their traditional songs and reciting the names of the PCs as part of the lyrics. A large amount of food is served, as well as a small amount of fruit wine. One of the elders formally invites the PCs to live in Bardak, for their actions have proven that they are true guardians of the Icon, worthy additions to the tribe, and blessed by the spirits of the founders. The elder also says that they understand if the heroes must leave, for there are other villages and holy sites of the Icon that might need their help (this is half the elder trying to make the villagers accept that the PCs may need to leave, and half the elder hoping that these annoying visitors get the hint that they are a disruption to the status quo and should go).

PYLON TROUBLES

If the PCs return to the village and they have deactivated or otherwise hampered the functions of the pylons (and especially if there was an earthquake), the villagers can already tell that something is amiss, are worried about the future of the valley and their duties, and are angry at the PCs for bringing harm to the village. If the PCs aren't very, very careful, the villagers form a mob and attack the PCs, pelting them with fruit, pushing them out of Bardak, and shouting at them to never return. Individually or in small



numbers, the villagers are not a threat, but all sixty or so healthy adult villagers working together can overwhelm the PCs, functioning as four level 4 mobs, which doesn't include the Great Elders attacking.

TIME TO WALK AWAY

If the PCs leave Bardak as heroes, the entire village gathers to see them off. The elders speak a blessing for them, the villagers give them food and warm clothing (if they haven't done so already), and one villager (if the PCs befriended any villagers, it should be one of those) presents them with a carved wooden box containing 50 shins—all donated by the adult villagers as a thank-you for their holy efforts to serve the Icon. The PCs can then head out into the world, looking for more wonders to discover and a way to get back to the part of the world they're familiar with.

If the villagers are now hostile to the PCs or the PCs otherwise want to slip away unnoticed, there is no fanfare as they depart. At best, a few villagers and one elder watch to make sure they leave. At worst, some villagers may shout insults at the PCs as they leave, though none curse, threaten, or attack them as they go. In any case, the PCs can make their way down the mountain in search of civilization, travel north or south along the cold mountain for other places to

explore, or even crest the ridge to the east and see what lies beyond.

REBUILDING THE TELEPORTER

This ending is similar to the previous one (including the farewell reactions of the villagers), except instead of heading downhill toward the flat land, the PCs climb back toward the arrival dome.

To connect the devices they salvaged from the Icon's cave to the arrival building, the PCs must use the crafting numenera skill to plug all the pieces together in the right way and the right order. This requires six crafting numenera rolls, each of which takes an hour. The first roll is level 1, the second is level 2, and so on, all the way up to level 6 for the final roll. If the crafting PC fails a roll, they can try again (a failed roll costs them an hour of time, and they have to use Effort on the reroll). The GM should keep track of how many failures are rolled as part of this process (it has an impact on the PCs later). Because some of the last rolls are very difficult, the PCs might want to apply Effort to them to make the task easier and prevent multiple failures in a row.

Another character trained in the crafting numenera skill can help the PC doing the repairs. This eases the difficulty by two steps—one for helping, one for being trained in the skill. A character with an inability in the crafting

Modifying Difficulty,
page 25

Applying Effort, page 21

Unless the PCs have cold-weather clothing from the village, they take 1 point of cold damage every ten minutes they are here. Building a large campfire inside the structure somewhat offsets the cold so that unprotected PCs take only 1 point of cold damage every hour.

Hindered, page 23

numenera skill, or no training in it at all, can't help with these tasks.

If none of the PCs have the crafting numenera skill, they can try repairing the teleporter using the understanding numenera skill, but the difficulty of all the rolls are hindered.

Once the PCs have everything plugged in, they can tell that the pieces are drawing power and everything should work. However, the whole thing is a kit-bashed mess of different parts, and odds are it'll work only once—like the teleportation to this place at the start of the adventure, this is a one-way trip. When they activate the teleporter, a familiar chain of events begins, all taking place in a matter of seconds: a force field bubble appears, preventing anything from moving in or out of the area. Weird lights flash. A deep vibration begins and increases in intensity. Some of the patched-together connections start to melt, and one part of the device shudders and starts emitting smoke. Finally, there is a bright flash and the teleportation occurs.

What exactly happens to the PCs depends on how successful they were at crafting this improvised teleporter. If they failed no crafting rolls, everything works fine and everyone arrives perfectly healthy. If they failed one crafting roll, a minor secondary effect happens when they activate the teleporter. If they failed two crafting rolls, there is a major secondary effect. If they failed three or more crafting rolls, there is a

minor secondary effect, a major secondary effect, and the PCs end up off-target (landing wherever in the Ninth World the GM wants the next session to take place). If there is a secondary effect, roll on the following table or tables to see what happens.

MINOR SECONDARY EFFECTS

1–4	The PCs feel uncomfortably hot during the teleport
5–8	The PCs feel uncomfortably cold during the teleport
9–12	The PCs arrive with discolored flesh, lasting 1d6 days
13–16	The PCs have strange nightmares for 1d6 days
17–20	The PCs' hair thins or falls out for 1d6 days

MAJOR SECONDARY EFFECTS

1–4	Inflicts 4 points of Might damage from flawed cell reassembly
5–8	Triggers a random cypher held by each PC
9–12	Radiation damage to eyes hinders sight-based tasks for 1d6 days
13–16	Violently shakes the ground
17–20	Hinders Might tasks for 1d6 days



WRAPPING THINGS UP

Congratulate the players on a job well done!

If the PCs patched together a teleporter and used it, award each player 1 XP.

RANDOM CYPHERS

The PCs have several opportunities to acquire new cyphers in this adventure. Choose cyphers from this list or roll randomly to determine what the PCs get.

1	Density Nodule: A level 3 yellow crystal surrounded by thick metal wires. When attached to a weapon, for the next 28 hours it increases the weapon's density at the instant of impact, increasing its damage by 2 points.
2	Electricity Detonation: A level 4 metal disc with multiple blue crystals. It explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting electrical damage equal to the cypher's level. You can throw it up to a short distance.
3	Emotion Poison Injector: A level 4 synth syringe-like device with no needle. A person injected with it feels happy for one hour, easing all interaction tasks to affect them while it lasts.
4	Force Cube Projector: A level 3 segmented synth cube with a faint green glow coming from the gaps between the segments. It creates an immobile cube composed of six walls of solid force centered on you, each 30 feet (9.1 m) to a side, for one hour. The walls conform to the space available.
5	Gravity Nullifier: A level 5 belt attachment. It lets the user float into the air for one hour, moving vertically up to a short distance per round. This doesn't allow the user to move horizontally (but they can push away from a wall or use other methods to go sideways). The user must weigh less than 50 pounds (22 kg) per cypher level.
6	Instant Shelter: A level 2 cylindrical lattice made of synth. It absorbs water and air to create a simple cubical building 10 feet (3 m) on a side with a door and window. It is made of hard foam and is permanent and immobile once created.
7	Magnetic Attack Drill: A level 5 small sphere with a screw-like protrusion. If thrown at an opponent, it drills into them and inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level. If the opponent is metal or wearing metal, the attack roll is eased .
8	Might Rejuvenator: A level 6 handheld apparatus. It injects one creature with chemicals that restore a number of points equal to the cypher's level to the creature's Might pool.
9	Ray Emitter: A level 5 synth headband with metal knobs. The wearer can create a ray of energy that strikes a target up to a long distance away and inflicts heat damage equal to the cypher's level.
10	Warmth Projector: A level 3 metal container filled with nanofluid. When the fluid is touched to the user's skin, it forms an articulated carapace-like protective barrier for 28 hours that provides Armor equal to the cypher's level against cold damage.

RANDOM IOTUM

If the PCs salvage a cypher, roll once on this table. Reroll if the level of the cypher the PCs are salvaging is less than the minimum level of the iotum on the table.

Roll	Iotum	Minimum Cypher Level
01–12	1d3 io	1
13–24	1d6 io	1
26–49	1d2 responsive synth	2
50–65	1 apt clay	3
66–79	1 bio-circuitry	4
80–89	1d2 quantum	4
90–00	1 pliable metal	4

Remember that each PC has a cypher limit indicating how many cyphers they can carry at a time. If they're at their limit and find a cypher they want to keep, they'll have to leave one of their current cyphers behind or give it to another PC who isn't at their limit. Cypher limits, page 22.

Eased, page 23

It's okay if the PC finds a cypher that's like one they already have. The GM always has the option to reroll or choose another cypher.

Apt clay is a blue-grey clay with a metallic sheen. Quantum is an opaque synth box containing glittering points of light. Apt clay and quantum are not used this adventure, but they are useful for building many objects of the numenera—for future adventures!

BLACKTUSK

4 (12)

A cry that reverberates with what sounds like anguish typifies the hunting yowl of a distant pride of blacktusks. Those familiar with the noise know to find shelter, lest they become the pride's target.

A blacktusk is a catlike mammal over 7 feet (2 m) long with massive tusks. The creature's pelt is snow white, while its tusks are black as cloudy night in the Frozen South. A few populations of these savage hunters exist here and there across the world, but almost exclusively in areas of extreme cold. When humans venture into such areas, blacktusk prides might run them down as fresh food, or leave the newcomers alone and focus on prey they're more familiar with.

Hunters in lands far from the Steadfast are sometimes accompanied by trained blacktusks, which have been raised from kits to be companions in the hunt. Such blacktusks can be distinguished from their wild kin by the glowing cords of hemp-like material wrapped around their necks like collars.

Motive: Hunger or loyalty

Environment: Anywhere cold

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to quickness.

Combat: Blacktusks typically attack with their eponymous tusks, which inflict 5 points of damage, although they might also claw or pounce. If a blacktusk pounces, it is usually because the creature is attacking with surprise, or because it takes its first turn before its foe. A pounce attack inflicts normal damage but the victim must succeed on a Might defense task or be knocked down and pinned beneath the blacktusk until it can escape. Each round a victim remains pinned, the blacktusk savages it for 6 points of damage.

Blacktusks work together when hunting to increase their chances of bringing down prey, including more powerful creatures. Three or more blacktusks working in concert to attack the same target reduces the difficulty of one blacktusk's attack against the target by two steps.

Interaction: Wild blacktusks are vicious and cunning predators, but they are not suicidal, and if they have reason to believe their prey may be more than they can handle, they will break off an attack. If a lone blacktusk is encountered, especially one wearing a rope collar, it's likely a trained companion of some other creature, which is probably nearby.

Use: As encounters in cold wilds go, blacktusks are a great standby, especially if the PCs later encounter one as an NPC's "tame" companion.

GM Intrusion: The character injured by the blacktusk begins to bleed from the tusk wound, taking 2 points of damage each round (ignores Armor) until the PC spends an action bandaging the wound.



CHALIK

2 (6)

Chaliks are 1-foot (30 cm) long insects protected by elaborate yellow carapaces. They attack larger prey in small groups by sacrificing some of their number to catch and immobilize targets, allowing the remaining chaliks to freely attack and feed. They produce a surprisingly sticky secretion when killed or when they sacrifice themselves. They're found in warm wastelands, caverns, ruins, and sometimes run-down parts of human communities. Because chaliks can produce such a powerful bonding agent, craftspeople and others sometimes collect them for their fluid.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Almost anywhere except cold areas in groups of ten or more

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short; short when climbing

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to size.

Combat: Chaliks swarm a foe and bite with their mandibles. A group of four or more chaliks can attack as a single level 4 creature that inflicts 5 points of damage. Alternatively, a single chalik can contract its abdomen and cause the glands inside to burst, resulting in a gush of sticky secretions from its mouth (and in that chalik's death). This is a level 4 attack that inflicts no damage, but a single targeted victim who fails a Speed defense task is covered in the secretion and immobilized (and unable to take actions other than attempt to break free) until it can escape. Attacks against a target immobilized by chalik secretions are two steps less difficult.

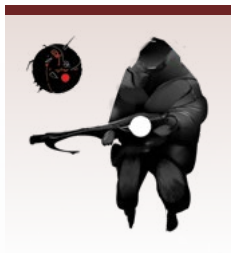
Chalik carapaces slough off their own secretions so they don't become stuck in the sticky material provided by their fellows.

Interaction: Chaliks are essentially insects, despite their size.

Use: A fight with an NPC becomes a lot more dangerous when the NPC knocks one of the characters into what turns out to be a chalik nest.

GM Intrusion: When the chalik is killed, it explodes. A character within immediate range is attacked as if by a chalik sacrificing itself to immobilize a target.





Gazers are speculated to be antiques of a forgotten war that were originally forged by the millions. Only a handful remain active. However, if one of the ancient warehouses could be discovered, that number could radically increase.

GM Intrusion: A gazer destroyed by an attack explodes, dealing 5 points of damage to every creature in short range. Other gazers in immediate range spin away to safety.

GAZER

1 (3)

A gazer is a levitating metallic spherical automaton, about 1.5 feet (0.5 m) in diameter. Various bits of equipment and blinking cyphers festoon a gazer's battered alloy body. A concavity on one side of the sphere incessantly emits a beam of scarlet light. Blinding at best, the red beam can intensify in a moment, creating a ray capable of burning through nearly anything.

Motive: Defense

Environment: Formations of six to twelve gazers might be found defending ancient ruined installations. Sometimes lone gazers are encountered as companions of jacks or nanos who reprogrammed it to act as a servitor.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long while flying

Modifications: Perception as level 5; Speed defense as level 2 due to size.

Combat: Groups of gazers fly in a spherical formation, which allows them to present the maximum possible perception and threat surface.

A gazer can fire its scarlet beam to attack a target at long range. If the gazer can see any part of its target, it ignores any difficulty step penalties for cover that the target might have otherwise enjoyed.

As few as three gazers can act as a swarm, focusing their attack on one target to make one attack roll as a single level 3 creature, dealing 4 points of damage. On a miss, a swarm of gazers still deals 1 point of damage.

The intensity of a gazer's beam is level 5 (as measured against the level of material of an inanimate object to be burned through).

Interaction: A gazer usually interacts only by flashing its beam in coded bursts, accompanied by eerie bleats of electronic static. Most active gazers follow a program to defend a location, reconnoiter a wider area, or seek and destroy those who match profiles held in their machine brains. However, if any group of gazers is interfered with too much, they will eradicate the perceived threat.

Use: Stories of the discovery of a rusted, crumbling cache of spheres laden with numenera reach the PCs. What's actually been discovered is a decommissioned gazer graveyard on the outskirts of an ancient war installation. A few gazer formations are still active.

Loot: Scavengers can recover 1d6 cyphers in the remains of a destroyed swarm.



ICE WEAVER

3 (9)

Delicate, lattice-like ice structures created by ice weavers are often mistaken as some kind of manifestation of the prior worlds. But these structures usually last only a few days or months before cracking, breaking, and melting away.

When a pack of ice weaver hunters moves into a new area, they first construct a redoubt of woven ice. When explorers or residents of isolated communities find such “ice castles,” they should beware. Ice weavers are near. Luckily the creatures never stay in the same area long.

Ice weavers absorb heat and excrete ice. About 12 feet (4 m) long, these low-slung predators are clad in frost scales, complete with many transparent spikes and barbs. Condensation vapor often swirls from their super-cold bodies, and they race along the ground by producing a layer of ice along which they can slide.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Almost anywhere in packs of three to eight

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 4 (see Combat)

Movement: Long

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4.

Combat: Ice weavers race quickly on self-created narrow lanes of ice and use that speed to their advantage in combat. An ice weaver can move a long distance and attack as a single action. It can also use its action to create a lane that stretches up above the heads of its prey, so that they can't reach it that round unless they try to climb an elevated, slippery ice lane (a difficulty 6 Might task).

When an ice weaver bites down on a foe, it drains heat and inflicts 4 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor). Completely frozen victims are dragged off and consumed later.

Anyone within immediate range of an ice weaver suffers 1 point of cold damage each round.

Interaction: Ice weavers are intelligent, but they prize hunting more than almost any other activity. Excess frozen prey is stored in lairs hidden in high glaciers, where ice weaver young are reared. Someone threatening a supply of frozen food or a weaver lair could get a pack to back off or move away from an area.

Use: Characters hear about a “prior-world ruin” that appeared without warning. When they investigate, they find no ruin, but the small village nearby is vacated and empty. The only clue about what happened is a muddy trail leading north.

Ice lanes are level 3 and melt in under an hour in warm conditions.

GM Intrusion: *The character must succeed on a difficulty 4 Speed defense task, or slip and fall hard (taking 1 point of damage) on an ice trail left by an ice weaver.*



UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHARACTER

CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS

Each character has a simple statement that describes them, like: "I am a [adjective here] [noun here] who [verb here]."

For example, Naveed is a Heroic Glaive who Thunders and Lobin is a Clever Nano who Focuses Mind Over Matter.

In this sentence, the *adjective* is called your descriptor.

The *noun* is your character type.

The *verb* is called your focus.

In some games, character type might be called your character class. It's the noun of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*." You can choose from six character types: Arkus, Delve, Glaive, Jack, Nano, and Wright.

Your descriptor places your character in the situation and helps provide motivation. It's the adjective of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

Focus is what your character does best. It's the verb of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

CHARACTER STATS

Every character has three defining characteristics, called "statistics" or "stats." Might, Speed, and Intellect.

Might: The concepts of strength, endurance, constitution, hardiness, and physical prowess are all folded into Might.

Might governs actions from forcing doors open to resisting disease. It's also the primary means of determining how much damage your character can sustain. Characters interested in fighting focus on Might.

Speed: Speed embodies quickness, movement, dexterity, and reflexes. Speed governs dodging attacks, sneaking around, or throwing a ball accurately. Nimble, fast, or sneaky characters have good Speed stats.

Intellect: Intellect encompasses intelligence, wisdom, charisma, education, reasoning, wit, willpower, and charm. Intellect governs solving puzzles, remembering facts, telling convincing lies, and using mental powers. Characters good at communicating effectively or wielding the numenera stress their Intellect stat.

POOL, EDGE, AND EFFORT

Each of these stats has two components: Pool and Edge. Your Pool is raw ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. A third element ties into this concept: Effort. When your character really needs to accomplish a task, apply Effort.

POOL

A Pool is the most basic measurement of a stat. Comparing the Pools of two creatures gives a general sense of which is superior. For example, Naveed has a Might Pool of 16, and thus is stronger than Chaury, who has a Might Pool of 12. Most average characters have a Pool of 9 to 12 in most stats.

When your character is injured, sickened, or attacked, you temporarily lose points from one of your stat Pools. The nature of the attack determines which Pool loses points. Physical damage from a sword reduces your Might Pool, a poison that makes you clumsy reduces your Speed Pool, and a psionic blast reduces your Intellect Pool. You can rest to regain lost points from a stat Pool (see Recovering Points in a Pool, page 28).

EDGE

Pool is the basic measurement of a stat, but Edge is also important. When something requires you to spend points from a stat Pool, Edge reduces the cost. It also reduces the cost of applying Effort to a roll.

For example, Lobin wants to use the Onslaught ability, which costs 1 point from his



Intellect Pool. Subtract his 1 Intellect Edge from the activation cost, and the result is how many points he must spend. Since the result is 0, the ability is free.

EFFORT

When your character really needs to accomplish a task, apply Effort. Applying Effort requires spending 3 points from the stat Pool appropriate to the action. Thus, if your character tries to dodge (a Speed roll) and wants to increase the chance for success, you can apply Effort by spending 3 points from your Speed Pool. The game master determines the difficulty of the task (1 to 10). Effort lowers the difficulty of the task by one step. This is called **easing** the difficulty. So, if the difficulty is 5, using Effort makes it 4. This must be done before you attempt a roll.

Every character has an Effort score, which indicates the maximum number of levels of Effort that can be applied.

When you apply Effort, subtract your relevant Edge from the total cost of applying Effort. For example, let's say you need to make a Speed roll. You apply one level of Effort, which will ease the task by one step. Normally, that would cost 3 points from your Speed Pool. However, you have a Speed Edge of 1, so you subtract that from the cost. So, it only costs 2 points from your Speed Pool.

Skills, equipment and special abilities can ease a task and can be used in conjunction with Effort.

EFFORT AND DAMAGE

Instead of applying Effort to ease your attack, you can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict for any kind of attack. For each level of Effort, you inflict 3 additional points of damage.

When using Effort to increase the damage of an area attack, such as the explosion created by a detonation cypher, you inflict 2 additional points of damage instead of 3 points. But those points are dealt to all targets in the area. Even if one or more of the targets in the area resists, you still inflict 1 point of damage to them.

SKILLS (AND INABILITIES)

Your character has training in a handful of specific skills. For example, you might be trained in sneaking, climbing and jumping, or social interactions. A character's level of skill is either trained (reasonably skilled) or specialized (very skilled).

If you are trained in a skill relating to a task, ease that task by one step. If you are specialized, ease it by two steps. A skill can never ease a task by more than two steps, but you can use a skill and Effort together.



You can always attempt any action—you do not need a related skill. In other words, having training in climbing doesn't let you climb, it just makes you good at it. Anyone can still try to climb.

Some characters have inabilities. If a character has an inability in a task, the difficulty of that task is one step more difficult for that character. This is called **hindering** a task.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Character types and foci grant PCs special abilities. Using these abilities usually costs points from your stat Pools (listed in parentheses after the ability name). Your Edge in the appropriate stat can reduce the cost, but you can only apply Edge once per action. For example, let's say a Nano with an Intellect Edge of 2 wants to use their Onslaught ability, which costs 1 Intellect point. They also want to increase the damage by using a level of Effort, which costs 3 Intellect points. The total cost for the action is 2 points from their Intellect Pool (1 point for the Onslaught plus 3 points for using Effort minus 2 points from their Edge).

Sometimes the point cost for an ability has a + sign after the number. That means you can spend more points or more levels of Effort to improve the ability.

Many special abilities grant a character the option of performing an **action** that they couldn't normally do, such as projecting rays of cold or attacking multiple foes at once. Using one of these abilities is an action unto itself, and the end of the ability's description says "Action" to remind you.

Some special abilities allow you to perform a familiar action—one that you can already do—in a different way. For example, an ability might let you wear heavy armor or add 2 points of fire damage to your weapon damage. These are called **enablers**. Using one of these abilities is not considered an action. Enablers either function constantly (such as being able to wear heavy armor) or happen as part of another action (such as adding fire damage to your weapon damage, which happens as part of your attack). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability's description says "Enabler" to remind you.

If you fail at a task, you can usually try again, but you must apply Effort on any attempts after the first one.





CYPHERS AND ODDITIES

Cyphers are a type of numenera that have a single use. They might allow you to fly or become temporarily invisible. You can't bear many cyphers at a time because these weird items emit radiation or dangerous chemicals that don't mix well. Thus, each character has a cypher limit indicating how many cyphers they can carry.

You can use your cyphers to activate their abilities as your action, just as you would a special ability. The only difference is, once you've used a cypher, it's gone.

Characters will find new cyphers frequently during the game, so players shouldn't hesitate to use their cypher abilities.

Oddities are numenera devices that don't have much (apparent) practical purpose. They aren't weapons or tools or wondrous things that grant powers. But they at least have some barter value if you need to do some trading.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are technological devices like cyphers, but you can use them more than once. They also have a rate of power **depletion**, like "1 in 1d10." When an artifact is used or activated, the player rolls the designated die (1d6, 1d10,

1d20, or 1d100). If the die shows the depletion number(s), the item works, but that is its last use. A depletion entry of "—" means that the artifact never depletes, and an entry of "automatic" means that it can be used only once.

EQUIPMENT AND SHINS

Each character has normal equipment they can use, including backpacks, ropes, torches, and so on. In the Ninth World, a few special items are considered equipment as well. These include glowglobes and even stranger things, but if need be, such things are explained on your character sheet.

Shins are currency in the Ninth World—or the closest thing they have to currency. Shins represent a common unit of barter. When coins are needed, shins take the form of various bits and parts of numenera devices, usually scavenged from large machines—buttons, gears, or diodes.

A shin is enough to buy a hefty drink or a light meal. It will get you a bed to sleep in for a night, or allow you to buy a small, simple object like a knife.



HOW TO PLAY NUMENERA

Numenera is played in the joint imagination of all the players, including the GM. The GM sets the scene, the players state what their characters attempt to do, and the GM determines what happens next. One scene logically flows to the next—you might start in a town, travel across the wilderness, and eventually end up at the site of a prior-world ruin—and before you know it, you've got a story as compelling as any you've read or watched. The rules and the dice help make the game run smoothly, but it's the people, not the rules or the dice, that direct the action and determine the story—and the fun. If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

Numenera uses a twenty-sided die (d20) to determine the results of most actions. Whenever a *roll* of any kind is called for and no die is specified, roll a d20.

This is how you play Numenera:

1. The player tells the GM what they want to do. This is a *character action*.
2. The GM determines if that action is routine (and therefore works without needing a roll) or if there's a chance of failure.
3. If there is a chance of failure, the GM determines which stat the task uses (Might, Speed, or Intellect) and the task's *difficulty*—how hard it will be on a scale from 1 (really easy) to 10 (basically impossible).
4. The player and the GM determine if anything about the character—such as training, equipment, special abilities, or various actions—can modify the difficulty up or down by one or more steps. Decreasing the difficulty is called *easing*, increasing the difficulty is called *hindering*. If these *modifications* reduce the difficulty to less than 1, the action is routine (and therefore works with no roll needed).
5. If the action still isn't routine, the GM uses its difficulty to determine the *target number*—how high the player must roll to succeed at the action (see the Task Difficulty table, page 24).

The target number is always three times the task's difficulty, so a difficulty 4 task has a target number of 12. To succeed at the task, you must roll the target number or higher. The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but can offer hints, especially if the character would reasonably know if the action was easy, average, difficult, or impossible.

6. The player rolls a d20. If the roll is equal to or higher than the target number, the character succeeds.

That's it. That's how to do anything, whether it's identifying a strange device, calming a raging drunk, climbing a treacherous cliff, or battling a savage cragworm. Even if you ignored all the other rules, you could still play Numenera with just this information.

The key features here are: character actions, determining task difficulty, and determining modifications (easing or hindering).

TAKING ACTION

Each character gets one turn each round. On a character's turn, they can do one thing—an action. All actions fall into one of three categories: Might, Speed, or Intellect (just like the three stats). Many actions require die rolls (rolling a d20).

Every action performs a task, and every task has a difficulty that determines what number a character must reach or surpass with a die roll to succeed. Most tasks have a difficulty of 0, which means the character succeeds automatically. For example, walking across a room, opening a door, picking something off the floor, and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket are all actions, but none of them requires a roll. Actions that are usually difficult or that become difficult due to the situation (such as shooting at a target in a blizzard) have a higher difficulty. These actions usually require a roll.





WHEN DO YOU ROLL?

Any time your character attempts a task, the GM assigns a difficulty to that task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

When you jump from a burning vehicle, swing a battleaxe at a mutant beast, swim across a raging river, identify a strange device, convince a merchant to give you a lower price, craft an object, use a power to control a foe's mind, or use a heat-beam emitter to carve a hole in a wall, you make a d20 roll.

However, if you attempt something that has a difficulty of 0, no roll is needed—you automatically succeed. Many actions have a difficulty of 0. Examples include walking across the room and opening a door, using a special ability to negate gravity so you can fly, using an ability to protect your friend from radiation, or activating a device (that you already understand) to erect a force field. These are all routine actions and don't require rolls.

Using skill, assets, and Effort, you can decrease the difficulty of potentially any task to 0 and thus negate the need for a roll. Walking across a narrow wooden beam is tricky for most people, but for an experienced gymnast, it's routine. You can even decrease the difficulty of an attack on a foe to 0 and succeed without rolling. If there's no roll, there's no chance for failure. However, there's also no chance for remarkable success (in Numenera, that usually means rolling a 19 or 20; see Special Rolls, page 28).

DETERMINING TASK STAT

Every task relates to one of a character's three stats: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Physical activities that require strength, power, or endurance relate to Might. Physical activities

that require agility, flexibility, or fast reflexes relate to Speed. Mental activities that require force of will, memory, or mental power relate to Intellect. This means you can generalize tasks into three categories: Might tasks, Speed tasks, and Intellect tasks. You can also generalize rolls into three categories: Might rolls, Speed rolls, and Intellect rolls. The category of the task or roll determines what kind of Effort you can apply to the roll.

DETERMINING TASK DIFFICULTY

The most frequent thing a GM does during the game—and probably the most important thing—is setting a task's difficulty. To make the job easier, use the Task Difficulty table, which associates difficulty rating with a descriptive name, a target number, and general guidance about the difficulty.

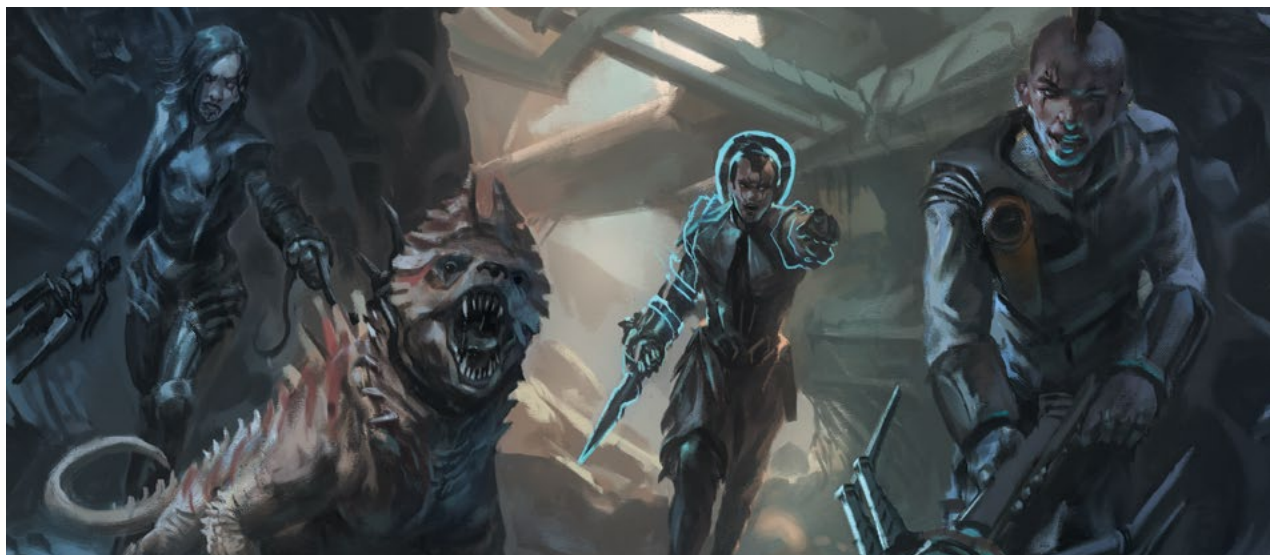
Every difficulty from 1 to 10 has a target number associated with it. The target number is easy to remember: it's always three times the difficulty. The target number is the minimum number a player needs to roll on a d20 to succeed at the task. Moving up or down on the table is called hindering or easing the difficulty, which is measured in steps. For example, reducing a difficulty 5 task to a difficulty 4 task is "easing the task by one step."

Modifiers affect the difficulty rather than the player's roll. This has two consequences:

1. Low target numbers such as 3 or 6, which would be boring in most games that use a d20, are not boring in Numenera. For example, if you need to roll a 6 or higher, you still have a 25% chance to fail.
2. The upper levels of difficulty (7, 8, 9, and 10) are all but impossible because the target numbers are 21 or higher, which you can't roll

TASK DIFFICULTY

Task Difficulty	Description	Target No.	Guidance
0	Routine	0	Anyone can do this basically every time.
1	Simple	3	Most people can do this most of the time.
2	Standard	6	Typical task requiring focus, but most people can usually do this.
3	Demanding	9	Requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
4	Difficult	12	Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
5	Challenging	15	Even trained people often fail.
6	Intimidating	18	Normal people almost never succeed.
7	Formidable	21	Impossible without skills or great effort.
8	Heroic	24	A task worthy of tales told for years afterward.
9	Immortal	27	A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes.
10	Impossible	30	A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics).



on a d20. However, it's common for PCs to have abilities or equipment that ease a task and thus lower the target number to something they *can* roll on a d20.

When setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters. Difficulty is not relative. A level 4 locked door is the same no matter who tries to open it.

MODIFYING DIFFICULTY

Character skills, favorable circumstances, or excellent equipment can decrease the difficulty of a task. For example, if a character is trained in climbing, they turn a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 5 climb. This is called “easing the task by one step.” If they’re specialized in climbing, they turn a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 4 climb. This is called “easing the task by two steps.”

A *skill* is a category of knowledge, ability, or activity relating to a task, such as climbing, geography, or persuasiveness. A character who has a skill is better at completing related tasks than a character who lacks the skill. A character's level of skill is either *trained* (reasonably skilled) or *specialized* (very skilled).

If you are trained in a skill relating to a task, you ease that task by one step. If you are specialized, you ease it by two steps. A skill can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

Anything else that eases a task (help from an ally, a particular piece of equipment, or some other advantage) is referred to as an *asset*. Assets can never ease a task by more than two steps.

You can also ease a given task by applying Effort. This costs 3 points from the relevant stat Pool, minus any Edge. Using Effort eases a task by one step.

To sum up, three things can ease a task's difficulty: skills, assets, and Effort. If you can decrease a task's difficulty to 0, you automatically succeed and don't need to make a roll.

COMBAT

Making an attack in combat works the same way as any other roll: the GM assigns a difficulty to the task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

The difficulty of your attack roll depends on how powerful your opponent is. Just as tasks have a difficulty from 1 to 10, creatures have a level from 1 to 10. Most of the time, the difficulty of your attack roll is the same as the creature's level. For example, if you attack a level 2 bandit, it's a level 2 task, so your target number is 6.

Players make all die rolls. If a character attacks a creature, the player makes an attack roll. If a creature attacks a character, the player makes a defense roll.

The damage dealt by an attack is a flat number based on the weapon or attack used. For example, a spear always does 4 points of damage.

Your Armor characteristic reduces the damage you take from attacks directed at you. You get Armor from wearing physical armor (such as a sturdy leather jerkin or chainmail) or from special abilities. Like weapon damage, Armor is a flat number, not a roll. If you're attacked, subtract your Armor from the damage you take. For example, a leather jerkin gives you 1 point of Armor, meaning that you take 1 less point of damage from attacks. If a bandit hits you with a knife for 2 points of damage while you're wearing a leather jerkin, you take only 1 point of damage. If your Armor reduces the damage from an attack to 0, you take no damage from that attack.

When you see the word “Armor” capitalized in the game rules (other than as the name



of a special ability), it refers to your Armor characteristic—the number you subtract from incoming damage. When you see the word “armor” with a lowercase “a,” it refers to any physical armor you might wear.

Typical physical weapons come in three categories: light, medium and heavy.

LIGHT WEAPONS inflict only 2 points of damage, but they ease the attack roll by one step because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons are punches, kicks, clubs, knives, handaxes, rapiers, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

MEDIUM WEAPONS inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include swords, battleaxes, maces, crossbows, spears, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand (even if it's often used in two hands, such as a quarterstaff or spear) is a medium weapon.

HEAVY WEAPONS inflict 6 points of damage, and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are huge swords, great hammers, massive axes, halberds, heavy crossbows, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands is a heavy weapon.

ATTACK MODIFIERS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

In combat situations, many modifiers might come into play. The GM is at liberty to assess whatever modifiers they think are appropriate to the situation (that's their role in the game). Often the modifier is applied as a step in difficulty. So if a situation hinders attacks, that means if a PC attacks a nonplayer character (NPC), the difficulty for the attack roll is increased by one step, and if an NPC attacks a PC, the difficulty of the defense roll is decreased by one step. This is because players make all rolls, whether they are attacking or defending—NPCs never make attack or defense rolls.

When in doubt, if it seems like it should be harder to attack in a situation, the attack rolls are hindered by one step. If it seems like attacks should gain an advantage or be easier in some way, the defense rolls are eased by one step.

DEALING AND SUFFERING DAMAGE

When an attack strikes a character, it usually means the character takes damage.

An attack against a PC subtracts points from one of the character's stat Pools—usually the Might Pool. Whenever an attack simply says it deals “damage” without specifying the type, it means Might damage, which is by far the most



THE DAMAGE TRACK

Hale is the normal state for a character: all three stat Pools are at 1 or higher, and the PC has no penalties from harmful conditions. When a hale PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become impaired. Note that a character whose stat Pools are much lower than normal can still be hale.

Impaired is a wounded or injured state. When an impaired character applies Effort, it costs 1 extra point per level applied. For example, applying one level of Effort costs 4 points instead of 3, and applying two levels of Effort costs 7 points instead of 5.

An impaired character ignores minor and major effect results on their rolls, and they don't deal as much extra damage in combat with a special roll. In combat, a roll of 17 or higher deals only 1 additional point of damage.

When an impaired PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become debilitated.

Debilitated is a critically injured state. A debilitated character can't take any actions other than to move (probably crawl) no more than an immediate distance. If a debilitated character's Speed Pool is 0, they can't move at all.

When a debilitated PC takes enough damage to reduce a stat Pool to 0, they are dead.

Dead is dead.

common type. Intellect damage, which is usually the result of a mental attack, is always labeled as Intellect damage. Speed damage is often a physical attack, but attacks that deal Speed damage are fairly rare.

NPCs don't have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called *health*. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount is subtracted from its health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to its target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

Objects have a damage track that works like the damage track for PCs. Attacking an object with a melee weapon is a Might action against the object's level.

As mentioned previously, damage is always a specific amount determined by the attack. For example, a slash with a broadsword inflicts 4 points of damage. A Nano's Onslaught force inflicts deals 4 points of damage. Often, there are ways for the attacker to increase the damage. For example, a PC can apply Effort to deal 3 additional points of damage, and rolling a natural 17 on the attack roll inflicts 1 additional point of damage.

AMBIENT DAMAGE

Some kinds of damage aren't direct attacks against a creature, but they indirectly affect everything in the area. Most of these are environmental effects such as winter cold, high temperatures, or background radiation. Damage from these kinds of sources is called ambient damage. Physical armor usually doesn't protect

against ambient damage, though a well-insulated suit of armor can protect against cold weather.

THE EFFECTS OF TAKING DAMAGE

When an NPC reaches 0 health, it is either dead or (if the attacker wishes it) incapacitated, meaning unconscious or beaten into submission.

As previously mentioned, damage from most sources is applied to a character's Might Pool. Otherwise, stat damage always reduces the Pool of the stat it affects.

If damage reduces a character's stat Pool to 0, any further damage to that stat (including excess damage from the attack that reduced the stat to 0) is applied to another stat Pool. Damage is applied to Pools in this order:

1. Might Pool (unless the Pool is 0)
2. Speed Pool (unless the Pool is 0)
3. Intellect Pool

Even if the damage is applied to another stat Pool, it still counts as its original type for the purpose of Armor and special abilities that affect damage. For example, if a Glaive with 2 Armor is reduced to 0 Might and then is hit by a monster's claw for 3 points of damage, it still counts as Might damage, so their 2 Armor reduces the damage to 1 point, which then is applied to their Speed Pool. In other words, even though the Glaive takes the damage from their Speed Pool, it doesn't ignore Armor like Speed damage normally would.

In addition to taking damage from their Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool, PCs also have a *damage track*. The damage track has four states (from best to worst): hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead. When one of a PC's stat Pools reaches 0, the character moves one step down the damage track. Thus, if they are hale, they





become impaired. If they are already impaired, they become debilitated. If they are already debilitated, they become dead.

Some effects can immediately shift a PC one or more steps on the damage track. These include rare poisons, cellular disruption attacks, and massive traumas (such as falls from very great heights, being run over by a speeding vehicle, and so on, as determined by the GM).

Some attacks, like venom from a serpent's bite, a hibernation device or the explosive secretions of a chalik, have effects other than damage to a stat Pool or shifting the PC on the damage track. These attacks can cause unconsciousness, paralysis, and so on.

RECOVERING POINTS IN A POOL

After losing or spending points in a Pool, you recover those points by resting. You can't increase a Pool past its maximum by resting—just back to its normal level. Any extra points gained go away with no effect. The amount of points you recover from a rest, and how long each rest takes, depends on how many times you have rested so far that day.

When you rest, make a *recovery roll*. To do this, roll 1d6 + 1. You recover that many points, and you can divide them among your stat Pools however you wish. For example, if your recovery roll is 4 and you've lost 4 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, you can recover 4 points of Might, or 2 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, or any other combination adding up to 4 points.

The first time you rest each day, it takes only a few seconds to catch your breath. If you rest this way in the middle of an encounter, it takes one action on your turn.

The second time you rest each day, you must rest ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time you rest each day, you must rest one hour to make a recovery roll. The fourth time you rest each day, you must rest ten hours to make a recovery roll (usually, this occurs when you sleep).

After that much rest, it's assumed to be a new day (Ninth World days are 28 hours long), so the next time you rest, it takes only a few seconds. The next rest takes ten minutes, then one hour, and so on, in a cycle.

If you haven't rested yet that day and you take a lot of damage in a fight, you could rest a few seconds (regaining 1d6 points + 1) and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another 1d6 points + 1). Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, you could recover 4d6 points + 4 points.

Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five explorers rests for

OBJECT DAMAGE TRACK

Intact is the default state for an object.

Minor damage is a slightly damaged state. An object with minor damage reduces its level by 1.

Major damage is a critically damaged state. An object with major damage is broken and no longer functions.

Destroyed is destroyed. The object is ruined, no longer functions, and cannot be repaired.

If the Might action to damage an object is a success, the object moves one step down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeded the difficulty by 2 levels, the object instead moves two steps down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeded the difficulty by 4 levels, the object instead moves three steps down the object damage track.

ten minutes because two members want to make recovery rolls, the other characters don't have to make rolls at that time. Later in the day, those three can decide to rest for ten minutes and make recovery rolls.

Recovery Roll	Rest Time Needed
First recovery roll	One action
Second recovery roll	Ten minutes
Third recovery roll	One hour
Fourth recovery roll	Ten hours

Using points from a recovery roll to raise a stat Pool from 0 to 1 or higher also automatically moves the character up one step on the damage track.

If all of a PC's stat Pools are above 0 and the character has taken special damage that moved them down the damage track, they can use a recovery roll to move up one step on the damage track instead of recovering points. For example, a Jack who is debilitated from a hit with a cell-disrupting numenera device can rest and move up to impaired rather than recover points in a Pool.

SPECIAL ROLLS

When you roll a natural 19 (the d20 shows "19") and the roll is a success, you also have a minor effect. In combat, a minor effect inflicts 3 additional points of damage with your attack, or, if you'd prefer a special result, you could decide instead that you knock the foe back, distract them, or something similar. When not in combat,

a minor effect could mean that you perform the action with particular grace. For example, when jumping down from a ledge, you land smoothly on your feet, or when trying to persuade someone, you convince them that you're smarter than you really are. In other words, you not only succeed but also go a bit further.

When you roll a natural 20 (the d20 shows "20") and the roll is a success, you also have a major effect. This is similar to a minor effect, but the results are more remarkable. In combat, a major effect inflicts 4 additional points of damage with your attack, but again, you can choose instead to introduce a dramatic event such as knocking down your foe, stunning them, or taking an extra action. Outside of combat, a major effect means that something beneficial happens based on the circumstance. For example, when climbing up a cliff wall, you make the ascent twice as fast. When a roll grants you a major effect, you can choose to use a minor effect instead if you prefer.

In combat (and only in combat), if you roll a natural 17 or 18 on your attack roll, you add 1 or 2 points of damage, respectively. Neither roll has any special effect options—just the extra damage.

Rolling a natural 1 is always bad. It means that the GM introduces a new complication into the encounter. This is called a GM intrusion.

1: Intrusion. The GM makes a free intrusion (see below) and doesn't award experience points (XP) for it.

17: Damage Bonus. If the roll was an attack, it deals 1 additional point of damage.

18: Damage Bonus. If the roll was an attack, it deals 2 additional points of damage.

19: Minor Effect. If the roll was an attack, it deals 3 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a minor effect in addition to the normal results of the task.

20: Major Effect. If the roll was an attack, it deals 4 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a major effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the PC spent points from a stat Pool on the action, the point cost for the action decreases to 0, meaning the character regains those points as if they had not been spent at all.

GM INTRUSION

GM intrusion reflects when something in the story occurs to complicate the character's life. The character hasn't necessarily fumbled or done anything wrong (although perhaps they did). It could just be that the task presents an unexpected difficulty or something unrelated affects the current situation.



HELPING

If you use your action to help someone with a task, you ease the task. If you have an inability in a task, your help has no effect. If you use your action to help someone with a task that you are trained or specialized in, the task is eased by two steps. Help is considered an asset, and someone receiving help usually can't gain more than two assets on a single task if that help is provided by another character.

For example, if Veteran the Glaive is trying to climb a steep incline and Jethua the Jack (who is trained in climbing) spends her turn helping him, Veteran can decrease the difficulty of the task by two steps.

Help is considered an asset, and someone receiving help usually can't gain more than two assets on a single task if that help is provided by another character.



At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. For example, an enemy might appear and attack, the rope the character is climbing might snap, or an unstable floor might give out beneath a character's feet. A GM intrusion always puts the spotlight on that one character, and when the GM finishes explaining what the sudden, surprising turn of events is, they ask that player, "Now what do you do?" They player must deal with this new complication.

When the GM intrudes in this manner, they must give the affected character 2 XP. That player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

As a general rule, the GM should intrude at least once each session, but probably no more than once or twice each session per character.

Anytime the GM intrudes, the player can spend 1 XP to refuse the intrusion, though that also means they don't get the 2 XP. If the player has no XP to spend, they can't refuse the intrusion.

Example Intrusion: Through skill and the aid of another character, a PC eases a wall climbing task from difficulty 2 to difficulty 0. Normally, they would succeed at the task automatically, but the GM intrudes and says, "No, a bit of the crumbling wall gives way, so you still have to make a roll." As with any difficulty 2 task, the target number is 6. The PC attempts the roll as normal, and because the GM intruded, the character gains 2 XP. They immediately give one of those XP to another player.

Another Example Intrusion: During a fight, a PC swings their axe and damages a foe with a slice across the shoulder. The GM intrudes by saying that the foe turned just as the axe struck, wrenching the weapon from the character's grip and sending it clattering across the floor. The axe comes to a stop 10 feet (3 m) away. Because the GM intruded, the PC gains 2 XP, and they immediately give one of those XP to another player. Now the character must deal with the dropped weapon, perhaps drawing a different weapon or using their next turn to scramble after the axe.

If a character rolls a 1 on a die, the GM can intrude without giving the character any XP. This kind of intrusion happens immediately or very soon thereafter.

RANGE AND SPEED

Distance is simplified into three categories: immediate, short, and long.

IMMEDIATE DISTANCE from a character is within reach or within a few steps. If a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 feet (3 m).

SHORT DISTANCE is anything greater than immediate distance but less than 50 feet (15 m) or so.

LONG DISTANCE is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet (30 m) or so.

VERY LONG distance is anything greater than long distance but less than 500 feet (150 m) or so.

Beyond that range, distances are always specified—1000 feet (300 m), 1 mile (1.6 km), and so on.

The idea is that it's not necessary to measure precise distances. Immediate distance is right there, practically next to the character. Short distance is nearby. Long distance is farther off.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance of you. A thrown knife (and most other thrown weapons) has short range. A bow has long range. A Nano's Onslaught ability also has short range.

A character can move an immediate distance as part of another action. In other words, they can take a few steps over to the control panel and activate a switch. They can lunge across a small room to attack a foe. They can open a door and step through.

A character can move a short distance as their entire action for a turn. They can also try to move a long distance as their entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if their character slips, trips, or stumbles as the result of moving so far so quickly.

For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of abhumans, any character can likely attack any abhuman in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. Exact positions aren't important. Creatures in a fight are always moving, shifting, and jostling, anyway. However, if one abhuman stayed back to use its crossbow, a character might have to use their entire action to move the short distance required to attack that foe. It doesn't matter if the abhuman is 20 feet (6 m) or 40 feet (12 m) away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the abhuman is more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.

ENCOUNTERS, ROUNDS, AND INITIATIVE

Sometimes in the course of the game, the GM or players will refer to an *encounter*. Encounters are not so much measurements of time as they are events or instances in which something happens, like a scene of a movie or a chapter in a book. An encounter might be a fight with a foe, a dramatic crossing of a raging river, or a stressful negotiation with an important official. It's useful to use the word when referring to a specific scene, as in "My Might Pool is low after that encounter with the blacktusk yesterday."

A *round* is about five to ten seconds. The length of time is variable because sometimes one round might be a bit longer than another. You don't need to measure time more precisely than that. You can estimate that on average there are about ten rounds in a minute. In a round, everyone—each character and NPC—gets to take one action.

To determine who goes first, second, and so on in a round, each player makes a Speed roll called an *initiative roll*. Most of the time, it's only important to know which characters act before the NPCs and which act after the NPCs. On an initiative roll, a character who rolls higher than an NPC's target number takes their action before the NPC does. As with all target numbers, an NPC's initiative roll target number is three times the NPC's level. Many times, the GM will have all NPCs take their actions at the same time, using the highest target number from among all the NPCs. Using this method, any characters who rolled higher than the target number act first,

then all the NPCs act, and finally any characters who rolled lower than the target number act.

The order in which the characters act usually isn't important. If the players want to go in a precise order, they can act in initiative order (highest to lowest), by going around the table, by going oldest to youngest, and so on.

For example, Colin, James, and Shanna are in combat with two level 2 abhumans. The GM has the players make Speed rolls to determine initiative. Colin rolls an 8, Shanna rolls a 15, and James rolls a 4. The target number for a level 2 creature is 6, so each round Colin and Shanna act before the abhumans, then the abhumans act, and finally James acts. It doesn't matter whether Colin acts before or after Shanna, as long as they think it's fair.

After everyone—all PCs and NPCs—in the combat has had a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. In all rounds after the first, everyone acts in the same order as they did in the first round. The characters cycle through this order until the logical end of the encounter (the end of the fight or the completion of the event) or until the GM asks them to make new initiative rolls. The GM can call for new initiative rolls at the beginning of any new round when conditions drastically change. For example, if the NPCs gain reinforcements, the environment changes (perhaps the lights go out), the terrain changes (maybe part of the balcony collapses under the PCs), or something similar occurs, the GM can call for new initiative rolls.

Since the action moves as a cycle, anything that lasts for a round ends where it started in the cycle. If Valleris the Nano uses an esotery on an opponent that hinders its defenses for one round, the effect lasts until Valleris acts on his next turn.

INTERACTION

Obviously, players can talk to each other all they want, and at least some of that conversation represents what the characters are saying to each other. Often, a PC will want to talk to an NPC. It might be to haggle with a shopkeeper, convince a guard to let them pass by, or just get information from someone in the know. This conversation is normally handled by the GM taking on the NPC role and talking things through. When a PC tries to convince an NPC of something, or when they try to deceive or intimidate the NPC, a roll is involved. This is handled just like anything else—use the level of the NPC as the difficulty, modified by the circumstances. Trying to convince a loyal soldier to disobey orders is harder than their level might indicate, but convincing the soldier that new orders have



Special abilities you get from being a Glaive are called fighting moves. Nanos have esoterics, Jacks have tricks of the trade, Arkai have precepts, Delves have Delve lores, and Wrights have inspired techniques.





come in might be normal. Skills like persuasion or deception might help, and of course Effort can be used (usually Intellect).

EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Although fighting dangerous beasts or other foes can be interesting and exciting, much of gameplay in Numenera probably involves other situations: overcoming obstacles, interacting with NPCs (some of them being weird creatures, machine intelligences, or far stranger things!), figuring out bits of ancient technology, solving mysteries, finding solutions to problems, blazing trails through the wilderness, sneaking, climbing, running, and all other kinds of exciting activities. Sometimes these actions allow PCs to achieve goals, such as “find the lost child in the woods,” or “help escort a merchant to the next town.” But more often than not, they propel characters toward making discoveries.

The core of gameplay in Numenera—the answer to the question “What do characters do in this game?”—is “Discover new things or old things that are new again—and then use them to build a better future.” This can be the discovery of something a character can use, like an artifact. It makes the character more powerful because it almost certainly grants a new capability or option, but it’s also a discovery unto itself and results in a gain of experience points.

Discovery can also mean finding a new numenera procedure or device (something too big to be considered a piece of equipment) or even previously unknown information. If the PCs find an ancient hovertrain and get it working again so they can use it to reach a distant location, that’s a discovery. If they locate a signal receiving station and figure out how to turn off the transmission from an overhead satellite

that’s causing all the animals in the region to become hostile, that’s a discovery. The common thread is that the PCs discover something that they can understand and put to use. A cure for a plague, the means to draw power from a hydroelectric plant, an operational flying craft, or an injection that grants the knowledge to create a protective force field dome over a structure—these are all discoveries.

The GM should award between 1 and 4 XP at the end of a session if the characters made any significant discoveries.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are rewards given to players when the GM intrudes on the story (this is called GM intrusion) with a new and unexpected challenge. For example, in the middle of combat, the GM might inform the player that they drop their weapon. However, to intrude in this manner, the GM must award the player 2 XP. The rewarded player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

Alternatively, the player can refuse the GM intrusion. If they do so, they don’t get the 2 XP from the GM, and they must also spend 1 XP that they already have. If the player has no XP to spend, they can’t refuse the intrusion.

The GM can also give players XP between sessions as a reward for recovering interesting artifacts or making discoveries during an adventure. You don’t earn XP for killing foes or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play. Discovery is the soul of Numenera.

A player can spend XP they’ve accumulated to reroll any die roll and take the better of the two rolls. Rerolling costs 1 XP.



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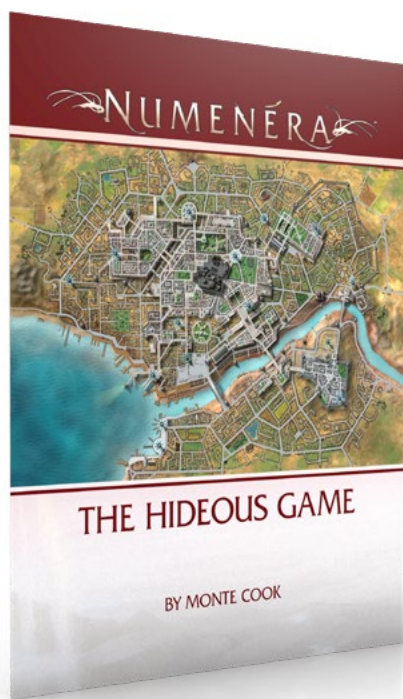
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